

Making a Doubting Thomas

By MMCM(SW) Tony DeJesus,
Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Va.

Follow the procedures, and you won't get hurt. Every junior Sailor hears those words, and, in most cases, they ring true. One Sailor, however, has some doubts.

He had to replace a defective O-ring on a valve manifold's hydraulic power pack. Before starting, he isolated the manifold by securing and tagging out the power pack. These actions **should** have ensured that all hydraulic fluid drained back into the sump. As he started opening the valve above his head, though, a small amount of hydraulic fluid dripped on his cheek. He wiped it off with his hand and kept working until he completed the job.

After taking a shower that evening, his right eye felt irritated. He went to medical, where corpsmen flushed his eyes and released him to full duty.

According to the mishap report, the Sailor followed the ship's policy and wore a faceshield when he secured the hydraulic power pack. Unfortunately, ship's policy didn't also require him to wear a faceshield while working on a depressurized valve located away from the power pack.

Because this mishap resembled one a week earlier, the ship changed its policy and now requires Sailors to wear faceshields for all maintenance involving hydraulic fluid. Even this requirement, however, does not meet the standards outlined in the *NavOSH Program Manual for Forces Afloat*¹. This instruction says that faceshields alone do not protect against flying particles, liquids and sprays. They are secondary protection and must be worn with protective eyewear (goggles).

In another case, a Sailor was doing maintenance on an elevator when residual hydraulic fluid splashed



Navy photo by PH2 Matthew Thomas

A Sailor checks a valve manifold like the one described in the first incident. He's wearing a faceshield, but also should be wearing goggles.

in his eyes. He flushed them, then went to medical, where corpsmen treated and released him. This Sailor had worn gloves, an apron, and a faceshield but no chemical goggles.

Never take anything for granted. Whenever eye hazards are involved, make sure that the eyewear protection meets the requirements outlined in the *NavOSH Program Manual for Forces Afloat*. 🦉

The author was assigned to the Afloat Safety Programs Directorate at the Naval Safety Center when he wrote this article.

For More Info...



¹ Appendix B5-B of OpNavInst 5100.19C, with change 2, contains guidance for maintenance involving hydraulic fluid.

Another reference on the same subject is NSTM, Chapter 575, Hydraulic Equipment, Power Transmission and Control (Revision 2), Section 5, Fluids and Fluid Handling.